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Select Poetry.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

Life is a race, where some succeed,
While others are beginning;
'Tis luck at times, at others speed,
That gives an early winning;
But if you chance to fall behind,
Ne'er slacken your endeavor,
But keep this wholesome truth in mind—
'Tis better late than never.

If you can keep ahead, 'tis well,
But never trip your neighbor;
'Tis noble when you can excel,
By honest, patient labor;
But if you are outstripped at last,
Press on as bold as ever;
Remember, though you are surpassed,
'Tis better late than never.

Ne'er labor for an idle boast
Of victory o'er another;
But while you strive your uttermost,
Deal fairly with a brother.
Whatever your station, do your best
And hold your purpose ever;
And if you fail to beat the rest,
'Tis better late than never.

Choose well the path in which you run—
Succeed by noble daring;
Then, though the least, when once 'tis won,
Your crown is worth the wearing;
Then never fret, if left behind,
Nor slacken your endeavor;
But ever keep this truth in mind—
'Tis better late than never.

Anecdotes by General Shields.

YEARS AGO GEN. SHIELDS was a prominent man in the politics of this country. He was twice elected to the United States Senate from Illinois. He was an officer in the Mexican war, where he greatly distinguished himself. He was shot through the lungs and survived the terrible wound. He still lives, and on the 2nd of July lectured at Lockport, N. Y., and a correspondent to the N. Y. Times, gives these extracts from his lecture:

DANIEL WEBSTER AND THE QUAKERS.

"While I was in the Senate (said Gen. Shields) I saw much of Webster both in and out of the Capitol. He met me one day and said: 'Shields, I find I have got into difficulty with some of my constituents, some Quakers, who are dissatisfied with my advocacy of a certain measure, and they have sent a large delegation down here from Massachusetts to make a protest. I have promised to meet them this evening, and I would like to have you there.'

"Why, what can I do?"

"Your native blarney, Shields—I it may help me out of the trouble."

"I laughed at the idea of blarney effecting anything where Daniel Webster's eloquence could not convince; and I made that my objection; but he insisted, and I promised to be on hand. Evening came, and I joined Mr. Webster at his rooms. Presently the delegation arrived and were seated; a dozen or twenty of the most solemn men I have ever seen, all rigidly costumed in Quaker. Without waiting any time the Chairman arose and addressed Mr. Webster in a set speech.—He commented severely on the course of the Senator as to the measure in question, setting forth the bad effects which it might have on their sect, expressing great sorrow and surprise that Mr. Webster had been found supporting such a bill, and concluded in a vigorous protest in writing, which bore many signatures. Webster listened attentively with unchanged countenance, and when the spokesman had resumed his seat he rose and replied. He spoke half an hour, and before he concluded he grew as eloquent as he was often heard. His defense was simply that he deemed the

measure one demanded by the interest of the whole country, although it might not be especially adapted to the wants and interests of any sect, and after clearly setting this forth, he made such an appeal to the delegation to remember that they were Americans, as well as Quakers, that I was fairly electrified.—The effect produced by his words on the delegation was astonishing. When he began they were all seated; after he had spoken 10 minutes one after another rose to his feet, until they were all standing; then they commenced to move toward him, and they had soon surrounded him in a body. Before he finished I saw the Chairman take out his petition and tear it to pieces; and when he had finished, some of them were shedding tears, and all were grasping Webster's hands as fast as they could get them. 'Friend Webster,' cried the spokesman, 'there is right and we are wrong; we owe thee an apology; we will say no more about it; thee knows thy duty better than we.'

"The next day I met Mr. Webster, and with a countenance of perfect gravity he said: 'Well, Shields—now did not we blarney those fellows nicely?'"

"ROUGH AND READY."

His first interview with Gen. Taylor was humorously described: "I was sent with my brigade to report to him on the Rio Grande. After getting my command into camp, I put on the most showy uniform I had, and spent much time rigging myself up to do honor to such an occasion as the meeting with the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Occupation. Arrived at headquarters I inquired for Gen. Taylor, and was shown into a tent by the orderly, who went away to announce me. Presently entered a hard-featured man, quite under-sized, who, from his appearance would easily have been taken for a waggoner. A great flapping straw hat crowned his head; he had no collar; a linen coat, and the coarse pantaloons he wore had no suspicion of rank about them, and his unstocked feet were covered by common infantry shoes. While I was trying to figure out in my mind what this apparition could be, he grasped my hand and heartily exclaimed, 'I am very glad to see you here, General Shields, and will cut out some work for your command before long.' And this was actually General Zachary Taylor, one of the bravest, kindest, and noblest men that ever lived."

CERRO GORDO.

Previous to the brilliant American victory at Cerro Gordo, the engineers, both of the attacking and defending armies had carefully surveyed the highest of the eminences that bristle about the place, and had reported it inaccessible. It overlooked the whole Mexican Army, but the Mexicans were confident that it could not be occupied, and the same belief prevailed in the American camp.—The night before the assault was a very dark one. Shields was in his tent when toward midnight a number of soldiers of his command came to him and asked permission to put a 6 pounder gun on the top of this cliff.

"I was astonished. Don't you know," I asked, 'that the engineers say that it can't be climbed?—to say nothing about putting cannon up there.' They insisted however that they should like to try it. 'Try it, then boys,' I said, 'no harm will be done, even if you fall.' They went away, and in two hours time they were back again with the amazing news that they actually had a 6 pounder in position on the summit of that almost perpendicular height.

"And if you will consent, sir," said one of them, 'we'll put a 12 pounder there, too.'

"Go ahead," I replied, 'I'll believe you can do anything now.' And long before daylight they reported that the 12 pounder was up there beside the 6 pounder, ready to open on the Mexicans in the morning. I thought the news too good to be kept, so I went to General Twigg's tent and roused him up. He heard my story, and looked at me as though he did not believe a word of it.

"Do you mean to tell me," he exclaimed, 'that those fellows of yours have hauled a 12 pounder and a 6 pounder up to the top of that height?'"

"Yes, sir; and what do you think of that?"

"I think there are two pieces of ar-

tillery lost to the United States; for there are not men enough in the army to get them down again."

"But those two pieces did excellent service against the astonished Mexicans that day, and they were got down again afterward."

AN INCIDENT.

Gen. Santa Anna was in command of the Mexicans at Cerro Gordo. He was utterly defeated and compelled to retreat, with heavy losses in prisoners, material, and killed and wounded. Shields was dangerously wounded in the fight, and of course left behind at Jalapa.—When he became convalescent he was informed that a lady living opposite the house where he lay had been very kind and attentive, and had been of much help to his attendants. As soon as he was allowed to walk out he went out to thank her, when he learned to his surprise that she was a daughter of Santa Anna. In the course of conversation that followed, he remarked:

"But did you know who it was that you were ministering to all this time?"

"Not at first," she replied. "I discovered after a time that you were Gen. Shields, who I heard was killed."

"Perhaps, had you known at the first that I was one who had a large share in defeating you father, you would not have relieved me."

She drew herself up with the air of an old Castilian. "Sir," she said, "had you with your own hand killed my father in fair fight—in fair fight—I would have done for you in your extremity just as much as I now have." And she looked it as well as spoke it.

MAGRUDER AND THE GUERRILLA.

It was during this campaign, and about this time, that an incident occurred which the lecturer very humorously described, but which is here greatly abbreviated. Gen. John B. Magruder, of subsequent Confederate fame, was then an officer in our Army, and plumed himself highly on his horsemanship. One day he rode across the square on a superb black animal that he had just bought for a high price, and came to the window by which Shields lay, that the latter might see and admire his purchase. The curvetting of the steed and the bearing of the rider drew a crowd into the square, and presently there were a thousand or more soldiers, citizens, and army followers of all kinds, watching and admiring "Jack Magruder" show off. After a time, when Magruder had stopped a moment, one of the Mexicans came up to him, patted and praised the horse, and told the officer that he rode almost as well as an inhabitant of the country.

"Almost!" Magruder cried. "I can ride as well as any Mexican. Show me one who can ride better!"

"Nay," said the Mexican, "you claim too much. You ride well, but it is not possible that you can know our horses quite as well as we do."

Magruder insisted, and, growing warm offered to bet a dozen doubloons that he could ride his horse better than the other could. The Mexican objected; said he did not like to bet and did not like to show off his horsemanship in public, but at last, as Magruder grew more urgent, he reluctantly consented, and the money was put up in the hands of another Mexican. For judges, an American was chosen by Magruder, a Mexican by his adversary, and the two together chose for the third a Frenchman. Then Magruder put his horse through his paces, first walking round the square, then trotting, then galloping, and, finally, putting the animal to top speed, with a magnificent burst that drew cheers and hand-clapping from the crowd. After a few moments the Mexican came forward for his trial. Without touching his hands to the animal he vaulted on his back and went through with precisely the same performance as had Magruder, and really approved himself the accomplished horseman of the two. Magruder himself joined in the applause, and acknowledged frankly that he was fairly beaten. The Mexican smiled and bowed, and said, "Now, if the Senator will wait a moment, I will show him a feat of horsemanship the like of which he has never seen."

Magruder consented, and the Mexican rode half way round the square; and then putting spurs to the horse disappeared in a twinkling.

"What the d—! does that mean?" said the owner of the horse.

"I only know one man who can ride like that," said a bystander, "and that is Molino."

"Molino, the guerrilla?" groaned Magruder.

"The same, sir. I don't think you'll ever see your horse again."

He never did; and the Mexican who had held the stakes had also disappeared; probably one of Molino's men. Magruder never heard the last of this exploit among his brother officers; and while this vexation lasted he declared that he was "the biggest fool in the American Army."

A SPIRITED RESCUE.

One of the thrilling episodes of the Mexican war which is not found in any of its histories, is that of the rescue of an English family from the City of Mexico before the capitulation, by a detachment of American soldiers. The city had been invested some time, when a refugee one night entered that part of our lines which Gen. Shields commanded. He was taken to the General, and to him he told the story. He was an English boy, and with his mother and a sister, just arrived at womanhood, occupied a home in the capital at the time of the investment. One of the lawless Guerrilla chiefs who held the people of the city as well as of the country in terror, had conceived a violent passion for his sister, who had repulsed his advances and he had declared in his rage that unless she consented to his proposals on the following morning he would carry her off by force, and cause her mother and brother to be executed. The lad, in the extremity of his terror, had made his way out of the city, past the sentinels and the lines, gained the American camp, and now besought the General to save his sister and mother. The ardent soul of Shields (who was then but 37,) was fired at the thought of the miserable fate awaiting these helpless ladies, and without communicating at all with headquarters (where flat refusal would have been certain,) he formed a plan for their rescue. To call it rash, quixotic, or dare-devil would be but the truth; the best defense of his proceedings of that night that it was a brave act, prompted by a generous heart, and that he succeeded perfectly, where disaster would have insured his dismissal from the army. He had about 400 picked men of his command detailed, and after quietly informing them what he proposed to do, he found every man eager for the adventure. Putting himself at the head of the little column, he silently left the American lines, and, favored with the darkness of night, approached close to the walls of the city without discovery. The sentinels could be seen on the walls, and the cry, "Sentinela alerta!" was heard as it passed from mouth to mouth. Guided by the lad the party scaled the wall at a favorable place, and seizing two or three of the astounded sentinels, descended into the city, and quickly made their way unopposed through the streets to the house to which the lad guided them. The boy ran in and informed the ladies that deliverance had come; they hastily collected a few valuables and articles of wearing apparel in a bundle, and placing the rescued party in the centre of the column, Shields started to return. But meanwhile the alarm had been given, and drums were beating and lanterns flashing all around the walls. Arrived near the point of entrance, it was found that the whole open space between the houses and the wall was filled with Mexican infantry and artillery. Shields instantly deployed, and gave the command to fire. A rattling volley, followed by a bayonet charge, threw the Mexicans into disorder, and the Americans rushed through and over them with their little party, made their way out, and returned to their own camp with but a few casualties, although they drew the fire of both sides on their return, for the American camp was now aroused, and the pickets were firing rapidly. But the tumult soon ceased on both sides, the adventurous soldiers returned to their quarters as though nothing had happened out of their usual course, and the ladies were safely bestowed for the night in a hut, made as comfortable as possible.

How he was called upon to account for this night's work will be best told in Gen. Shields' own language:

"The next morning an officer of Gen. Scott's staff came to my quarters with a message from the General that he would

like to know the cause of the previous night's alarm, as it originated in that part of the line which was under my command, I answered that I would report in person, which I at once did. On the way I thought the matter over, and concluded that it would be best to make a clean breast of it, and I did so. The story threw Gen. Scott into a tremendous rage. Ever since Cerro Gordo was fought he had addressed me at 'My Cerro Gordo friend,' but he now dropped that familiar name. 'Gen. Shields,' he thundered, 'you are insubordinate and reckless in the highest degree. You have put in peril the fruits of the whole campaign; you have, perhaps, frustrated all my plans for the capture of the City of Mexico! "Sir, I'll disgrace you; I'll court-martial you, and have you dismissed the service!" At this my temper rose, and I answered him plainly that he might court-martial me, and perhaps get me dismissed, but that after all that had occurred on this campaign, neither he nor any other man could disgrace me; and being by this time pretty well stirred up, I said that under like circumstances I would do precisely the same thing over again. Instead of being more angry, the General was rather softened by this speech. 'I was wrong, Gen. Shields,' he said, 'in saying that I would disgrace you; I ask your pardon for that. You are a brave man, and disgrace is not the word to use toward you. But you are greatly to blame in this matter, Sir. You have acted without orders, and have imperiled the whole campaign. "Gen. Scott," I said, 'before you say anything more about it, suppose you come over to my quarters and see these ladies.' After some further talk he promised to do so, and I rode back to my tent satisfied that I should have no further trouble with the affair. In an hour or over came Gen. Scott, and I at once introduced him to the ladies. The daughter was a picture of beauty, with her golden curls and her blue eyes; and after the mother had thanked the General for their preservation with tearful eyes and trembling voice, the girl seized his hands, wept over them, called him her preserver and invoked the blessings of heaven on his head. Scott looked from her to me with a very benevolent face, and said, 'Well, my Cerro Gordo friend, if I get you court-martialed for this, I shall have you promoted, too.' I have only to add that long afterward, when the war was over, and we had returned to the United States, I received from England, the gift of these ladies, a costly diamond pin as a token of their gratitude."

These are but a few of the interesting and varied reminiscences with which Gen. Shields entertains his listeners in public and private.

For the benefit of those curious to know something of the personal appearance of the man, it may be stated that he is of medium size, hale and hearty, though 67 years of age, with a keen eye, and something like the "brogue" in his speech. His residence is at Kansas City, Mo. He speaks without the least bitterness toward any of his contemporaries, either in civil or military life, and evinces the warmest interest in the prosperity and welfare of his adopted country.

The Rain Tree.

The consul of the United States of Columbia in the department of Lereto (Peru) has written from Yurimagus to President Prado, informing him that in the woods adjacent to the city of Moyobamba exists a tree called by the natives Tamia-caspi (rain-tree) which possesses some remarkable qualities. It is a tree of about fifteen meters (about fifty feet) high when at maturity, and of about one meter in diameter at the base, and has the property of absorbing an immense quantity of humidity from the atmosphere, which it concentrates and subsequently pours forth from its leaves and branches in a shower, and in such abundance that in many cases the ground in its neighborhood is converted into a perfect bog. It possesses this curious property in its greatest degree in the summer, precisely when the rivers are at their lowest, and water most scarce; and the writer proposed that it should be planted in the more arid regions of Peru, for the benefit of agriculturists.

Knife-wounds heal, but not those produced by words.